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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON IRAN

Summary

-- Jordanian local newspapers over the past few days, January 16-18, focused on a variety of local and regional developments. On the local front, papers highlighted the rejection of the draft income tax law by both the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament. On the regional front and in addition to reports on developments in Iraq, the Palestinian Territories, and Lebanon, papers focused on Iran's nuclear issue.

Editorial Commentary

-- "Iran and the double standards"

Daily columnist Samih Ma'aytah writes on the back page of independent Arabic daily Al-Ghad (01/16): "One cannot read the events in the region and the international intervention in isolation from Israel's interests and calculations, which are based on worrying about any political, military, or economic power that could threaten the security of this entity. Iran may be the greatest beneficiary from Iraq's occupation, the fall of the regime, and the disintegration of the Iraqi state. After all, it got rid of the enemy that broke the force of the revolution and came to have political, security, and ideological influence in the Iraqi arena. In its joy at these gains, the government of Iran purposefully disregarded the fact that what is going on in Iraq actually serves part of the Zionist scheme and Israel's interests and security formula and that the disintegration of the Iraqi state had achieved major objectives of the Zionist entity.. Tehran dealt with what is happening on its borders from the perspective of its own limited interests, and thus accepted and supported its friends in Iraq in their alliance with the U.S. administration in the military and political process. The pragmatic leadership of Iran probably thought that its unspoken alliance with Washington would be in the interest of its nuclear file, but it overlooked a very important matter, namely that Israel and Washington are not going to be willing to give any party the opportunity to own anything that would cause worry for Israel.. Iran, which ignored Israel's presence and the process of legitimizing Iraq's occupation but remembered that presence when it came to Iranian issues, shows not only excessive pragmatism but also wrong and very shallow calculations. Israel, which instigated and contributed to the arrival of armies into Iraq, is the same Israel that does not want Iran to own weapons that would threaten its security. Iran, during the Iraq occupation, adopted an approach based on interests, but when the tough got going against it, it resorted to ideological language, and the Iranian President spoke to the nation in the language of rebels and radicals. Iran should have used this language and talk of Israel's danger during the Iraq occupation war. What it did has robbed its revolutionary rhetoric from all value and credibility.. No Arab or Muslim can accept that any part of the nation be targeted, but he will not accept to be the victim of regimes jumping from camp to another. Iran, which favored its own interests during the Iraq war, cannot ask the people to be part of the revolutionary guard and the Tehran's masses."

-- "Iran's regional ace cards: will they prevent its domestication?"

Columnist Khairallah Khairallah writes on the op-ed page of independent Arabic daily Al-Ghad (01/18): "What could push Iran into a confrontation with the international community over its nuclear program? The answer lies in that the Iranian regime found that it has sufficient pressure cards to allow it to go very far in this confrontation, and the regime believes that it could come out victorious at the other end .. Since India and Pakistan have the nuclear bomb, then why shouldn't Iran? Why does the world accept India

and Pakistan as two nuclear powers but not Iran? Moreover, why does the world keep quiet about the fact that Israel has had nuclear weapons for decades and refuses to submit to any inspections? First of all, one cannot draw a comparison between Iran on one hand and India and Pakistan on the other. This is for a very simple reason. India has had the bomb with the support of the former Soviet Union that wanted to achieve a balance with China, and Pakistan owned the bomb with Chinese support also in order to create a balance with India.. As for Israel, it came to own nuclear weapons by a European decision which then became an accepted worldwide decision.. For Iran to become a nuclear power would be different, not because Iran as it stands today is more dangerous than Israel, but because Iran has managed, over the past few years, to benefit the most from the American war on terrorism and to strengthen its influence on various fronts, thus serving an ideology that is only in Iran's benefit.. Because of the American 'enemy' that turned out to be working for Iran, intentionally or not, Iran managed to get rid of the Taliban regime, its opponent in Afghanistan, and have Iraq become a zone for its influence. It also became apparent that redrawing the map of the Middle East was also in Iran's favor first and foremost.. A party that has all these regional ace cards . seems to be capable of throwing to the wind all international opposition to its nuclear program.. It is not easy for the world to accept Iran's nuclear program, but it is also difficult to force Iran to give it up.. What to do with Iran? Is it permissible for a country that has such ambitions to enter the world of nuclear arms? The answer is that it is not permissible, although it really up to America and how far it is willing to go in getting rid of the Iranian nuclear program."

-- "The region on a hot plate"

Chief Editor Taher Udwan writes on the back-page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (01/18): "The exploding crisis of the Iranian nuclear issue threatens to drag the region into a serious conflict that endangers regional security and stability.. The new Iranian defiance and President Ahmadinajad's remarks could give the neo-conservatives in the United States opportunities for undertaking a military escapade against Iran, just as it did in Iraq, which would ignite the region and escalate the armed struggle in Iraq to Palestine and all the way to Syria and Lebanon.. An armed struggle between America and Israel on one hand and Iran on the other, should it happen, would take place on Arab lands, and this calls for an Arab diplomacy and a united Arab stand that would prevent it from happening and prevent Arab land from becoming an arena for an armed international conflict. The problem with the Iranian nuclear issue is that it cannot be resolved with a pre-emptive strike, as the neo-conservatives in Washington and the Netanyahu-led Likud want, nor with an economic embargo, but with the west (America and Europe) returning to its senses and stopping their double standards policy. The crisis is fabricated under the illusion that Iran is seeking to own nuclear weapons, just as the crisis of the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction was fabricated."

-- "The spectator"

Daily columnist Nahed Hattar writes on the back-page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (01/18): "The main parties to the conflict, Iran and Israel, are waging the same quagmire for reasons and interests of their own that sometimes interconnect with American reasons and interests.. There are some who say that Arab nationalists must ally with Iran against Israel. This is true if the alliance is stemming from an independent Arab plan, because otherwise we [Arabs] are just tools in a regional struggle between two powers that look at the Arab world as a field for influence and interests."

HALE